## THE FAMILY

The basic and most characteristic Chinese institution has been and is the family. The family, of course, constitutes an outstanding feature of the life of every nation. Among the Chinese, however, it has been emphasized more than among most peoples. It has had a leading part in economic life, in social control, in moral education, and in government. The members of a family have been supposed to stand by one another in tria[1] and distress. The indigent and the aged have been expected to be cared for by their more prosperous and younger relatives. To a greater or less extent the family has performed the functions which in the modern Occident are associated with sickness and unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and life insurance. Magistrates have held the entire family responsible for the conduct of its members. The family has been looked upon as a model for the government, and the state has been thought of as a large family. Moral education has been given largely through the family and the leading although not the only motives appealed to have been family affection, loyalty, and pride. Through the rites in honor of ancestors the family has been an important religious unit.

As we have seen, this emphasis upon the family goes back to remote ages. In historic times much of it has been due to Confucianism, for this school has made much of the institution and of the duties of relatives to one another. The organization of the family, however, has not remained constant through the centuries, but has undergone important modifications, apparently especially in pre-Han times before Confucianism became dominant. Its history would prove interesting, but too little of it is known, or at

least has been put into easily accessible form, to warrant venturing Into even a brief summary. However, the main outlines of the family system can be pictured as they were on the eve of the great changes brought about by the Occident and as they remain in many places to-day.

Under the term family may be included various types of organizations. There is what may be called the small family, made up of husband, wife, and children. At present this is not much if any larger than the corresponding unit in the Occident. In one market town in North China studied not many years ago it averaged a